DEMOCRATIC
GERMAN REPORT

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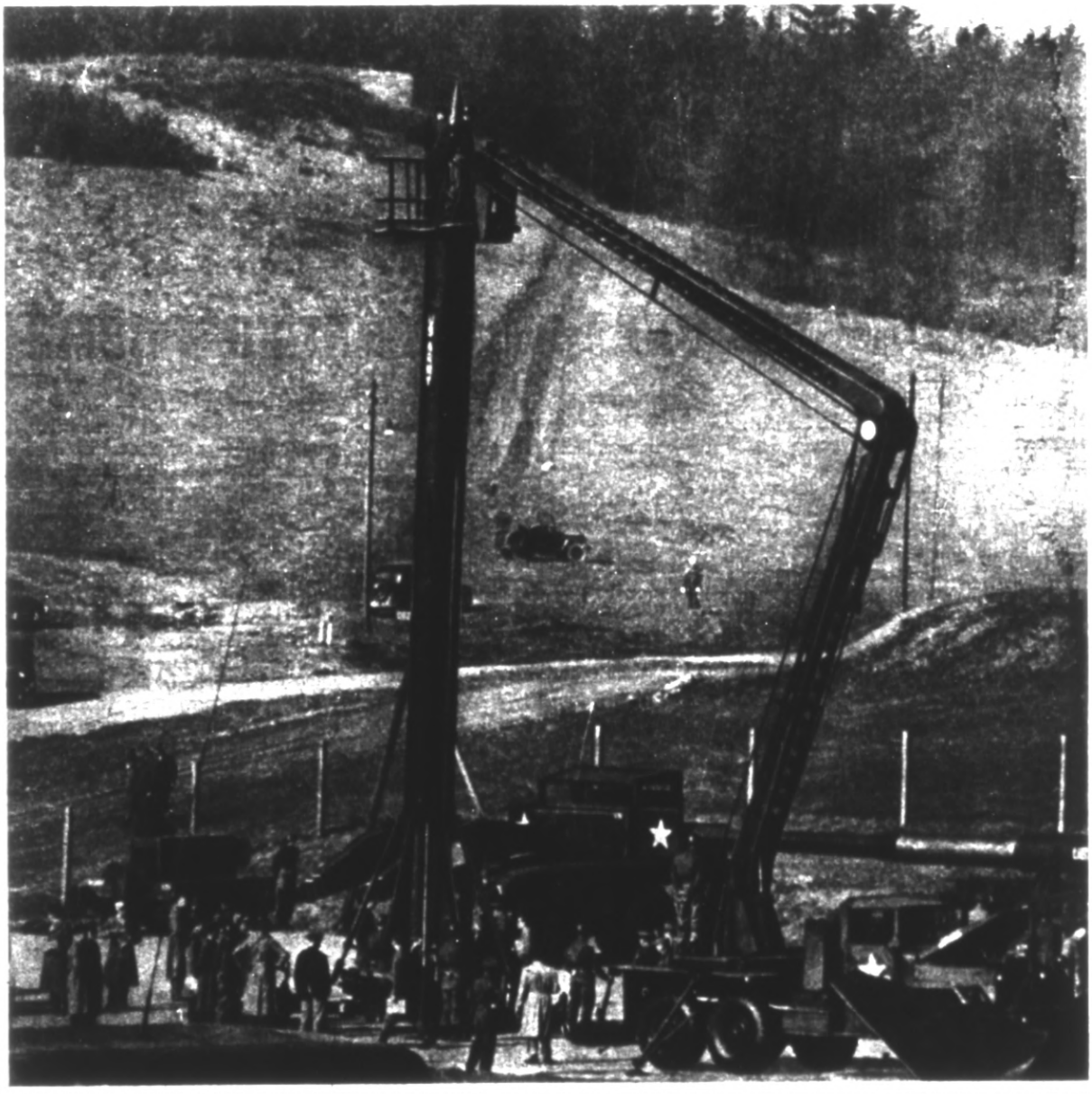
A NAZI FINGER ON THE BUTTON?



First picture of an atom-rocket already stationed in West Germany (Full story inside)

YOU CAN PROTEST TOO

Trade unions, peace organisations, student societies in many countries outside West Germany have begun to pass protest resolutions against the equipment of the West German Wehrmacht with nuclear weapons.

Resolutions can be addressed direct to
Chancellor Adenauer,
Bonn
West Germany

and to the West German Embassies in the various countries. Here are the addresses of the West German Embassies in a number of countries:

BRITAIN
4—6 Rutland Gate
Knightsbridge
London S.W. 7

U. S. A.
1742—1744 R Street
Washington 9, D.C.

CANADA
580/82 Chapel Street
Ottawa

SOUTH AFRICA
377 Andries Street
Pretoria

AUSTRALIA
Jardine Street
Kingston, Canberra

NEW ZEALAND
3 Claremond Grove
Wellington C.4

DENMARK
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Copenhagen

SWEDEN
Hovslagargatan 2
Stockholm

NORWAY
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Oslo

FINLAND
Rauhankatu 13 a
Helsinki

BELGIUM
Avenue de Terueren 269
Brussels

HOLLAND
Nieuwe Parklaan 17
Hague

INDIA
650 Sundar Nagar
Mathura Road
New Delhi

LONDON "TRIBUNE" ON ADENAUER'S BOMB

. . . An all-out political battle now rages in Germany. Dr. Adenauer . . . insisted on equipping his forces with the Matador — a missile with a nuclear warhead and a 600-mile range — and on forcing the measure through his Parliament before opposition could be mobilised . . .

He has been answered by a roar of protest . . . In Parliament, Socialists and members of the centre parties turned the debate into a fierce counter-attack. Jeers greeted Adenauer's explanation that "the world situation has deteriorated since the Federal Republic joined NATO".

. . . Great meetings at Frankfurt, Stuttgart and other centres have denounced the nuclear arms policy. The Socialist youth league has demanded a general strike and sent its leaders to press this course on the party and the trade unions.

Christian opinion is ranged against the Government; Pastor Niemoeller has threatened to withdraw Protestant chaplains from the armed forces. The unrest has spread to Adenauer's own party, and he has had to crack the whip of discipline.

This is the second great campaign that German Socialists have led against Adenauer in recent years. The first was in 1954, during the fight against German rearmament, to which nuclear armament is the logical sequel.

The Socialists then were let down — and Adenauer therefore saved — by the failure of a much-needed ally. This was the British Labour Party. A disarmed and neutralised Germany, and an atom-free zone in central Europe, which are the proposals now advanced by Mr Gaitskell and Mr Denis Healey with an air of brilliant originality, might be accomplished facts had Labour not been swung into line in 1954 with its enemies, and against its German comrades.

The new question — should Germany be armed with nuclear weapons? — now faces us here in Britain as well as the Germans.

We have little doubt what the answer would be if the question were put fairly to a Labour Party conference. But of course the British insistence on retaining the bomb undermines the demand that Germany should not have it.

Only a British renunciation of nuclear weapons can halt the deadly process whereby they are acquired by other nations.

("Tribune" London, March 28th)

Even Kensington Protests

". . . at a meeting for nuclear disarmament composed mainly of middle class and middle aged Kensingtonians there was something which in my estimation was rare.

"I had just heard the news that 2000 Henschel workers had downed tools and filled the streets of Kassel, and I asked the speaker James Cameron of the 'News Chronicle' if he could announce it in his address as vigorously as possible.

"He did so, and the effect was electrical. 700 people clapped to the echo. Many of them were on their feet cheering, and everyone instinctively knew the tremendous significance of the German workers' action . . ."

K.N., London N.W. 3

BEHIND THESE GATES: THE ROCKETS

Pictures of first atom-rocket base in West Germany

On the front page of this issue we are able to show you for the first time a photograph of an atomic-rocket base on West German territory.

At the moment these "Corporal" rockets are under the control of the American Army; but the decision of the West German Parliament to arm the new Wehrmacht with nuclear weapons means that nazi general Adolf Heusinger, commander of the West German forces, may soon have his finger on the push-button.

General Heusinger was Chief of Operations on Hitler's General Staff. In 1953 he publicly expressed his regret that Hitler did not completely wipe out the British Expeditionary Force at Dunkirk in 1940, and in the same year he wrote: "Attack whenever a chance presents itself. This is the method of fighting which the West should use in its encounters with the East".

The pictures of atomic rockets stationed in West Germany which we reproduce in this issue have been taken from the West German illustrated magazine "Der Stern". Here are a few extracts from the original text in this West German magazine:

Here are the original captions under these pictures in the West German illustrated magazine "Der Stern": "Behind this gate is one of the three zones in West Germany from which a massive counter-blow would be delivered in case of a Russian attack ... Everybody is suspect. The shout 'Hands Up' greets anyone who approaches this gate in the dark. The guard holds his rifle at the ready. Even the officers of the unit have to 'surrender'. As soon as they have passed the gate, their passage is announced to the next guard by telephone. Until they reach their billets they remain under supervision: everyone is suspect here."

"Somewhere in Germany. 365 days a year, American soldiers are on duty at rocket bases in West Germany, waiting for the order to go into action, an order which it is hoped may never be given. While the Federal Parliament discusses the subject, the 701 Guided Missile Wing stands ready for action with rockets which are only effective defensive weapons if they are equipped with atomic warheads. They stand somewhere in Germany. For security reasons we cannot name their exact location . .

"The Corporal rocket shown here is being made ready for a test launching. It is only worth using this weapon if it is equipped with an atomic warhead. Three battalions with sixty Corporal rockets are stationed at the ready in West Germany."

W. GERMANS COUNTER BOMB THREAT WITH STRIKES, DEMONSTRATIONS

On March 25th the Christian Democratic majority in the West German Parliament voted for atomic armament of the West German Wehrmacht, overriding the protests of the Social Democratic and Free Democratic members. The parliamentary decision was signal for the greatest popular movement of protest in West Germany since the end of the war. Here are some of the high points of the protest movement:

March 25th: While the parliamentary debate was still in progress, more than 1000 workers at the Henschel Works, Kassel, came out on a spontaneous five-hour protest strike.

The Central Board of the Builders Trade Union decided to give fullest support to all members who refused work on rocket bases or atomic arms projects.

March 26th: 2500 workers of the Anker Works in Bielefeld staged a short protest strike. Several hundred workers in the Heidenreich Foundry in Moelln downed tools one hour before time and staged a protest march through the town.

March 27th: Work in Hamburg harbour came almost to a halt when dockers staged an unofficial half-hour protest strike. Erich Ollenhauer, Chairman of the Social Democratic Party, declared that protest strikes against atomic armament were absolutely legal. He announced that his party favoured a plebiscite on the question of nuclear arms, and that the Social Democrats would support any new Government which opposed atom weapons.

It was announced that a total of 48,000 West German students had so far signed a declaration calling for a complete renunciation of nuclear weapons.

900 Hamburg doctors signed a declaration opposing the stationing of atomic weapons in West Germany.

March 28th: The Central Board of the West German Trade Union Federation announced that it would organise protest demonstrations throughout West Germany against atomic armament, and welcomed the decision of various trade unions to give full support to members who refused work on rocket sites etc. The Central Board decided against calling a country-wide protest strike at this moment, but reserved the right to take further measures if necessary. If no official plebiscite on the question were organised, the trade unions would consider polling all union members.

Several thousand workers at the Volkswagen Factory, biggest West German car factory, staged a one-hour protest strike.

March 31st: More than 3000 building workers and car workers in Brunswick staged a token one-hour strike of protest against the bomb.

An official delegation from the West German Trade Union Federation visited Chancellor Adenauer and urged him not to carry out the decision to arm the West German Wehrmacht with atomic weapons.

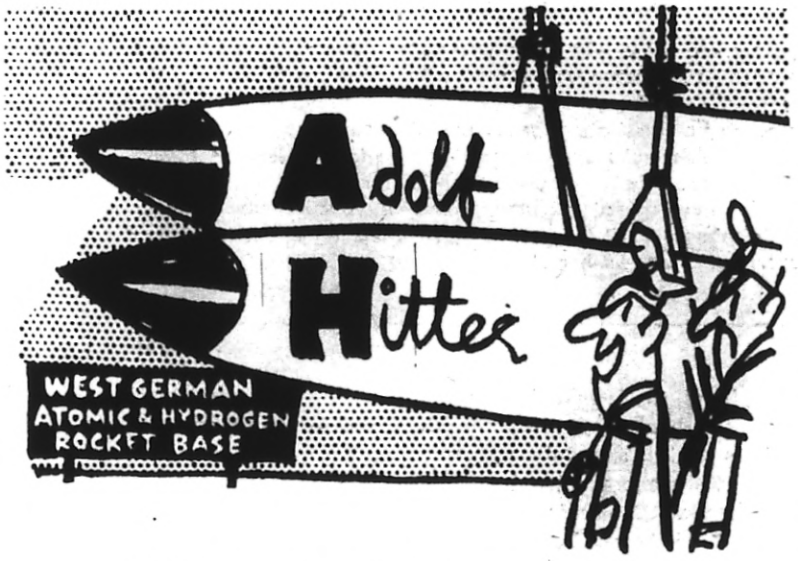
April 1st: The Hamburg Provincial Government, which has a Social Democratic majority, decided to hold a local plebiscite on the atomic-arming of the West German Wehrmacht. A West German Government spokesman threatened "serious measures" if local authorities in Hamburg or elsewhere were to stage such local plebiscites.

April 2nd: Social Democratic fractions in the provincial parliaments of Hesse, Schleswig-Holstein and Bavaria announced that they would press for atom plebiscites in those areas too, despite governmental threats.

5000 workers from all main factories in the south German town of Schwenningen downed tools half an hour early to demonstrate through the streets against the atom bomb.

April 3rd: Several thousand workers of the Kloeckner steel works in Cologne struck work for half an hour in protest against atom armaments.

April 7th: The annual conference of the "Falcons", Social Democratic Youth Organisation, unanimously passed a resolution calling for the use of all means, "including if necessary a political general strike" against the A-bomb.



"We had a competition for the most appropriate nick-names"

(Cartoon by Eccles, London)

White Book Due

The Government of the German Democratic Republic is preparing a "White Book" on the "anti-national and peace-endangering policy" of the West German Government, it was officially stated in Berlin on March 28th. The cabinet commissioned the Foreign Minister to prepare the foreign policy measures "called for by the decision of the West German Parliament" with regard to atomic armament.

DANGEROUS DINOSAUR!

Prehistoric Beast Endangers West German Security

A West German judge has ruled that the dinosaur depicted on this page is a threat to the security of the West German state.

The prehistoric animal appears on a poster printed by the Bavarian branch of the No-Conscription Fellowship, with the inscription "Extinct – Too Much Armour-plate, Too Little Brain." At the bottom of the poster the No-Conscription Fellowship added: "He who consults his conscience knows that he must refuse military service".

On March 14th, Judge Handel of Munich Court ordered the confiscation of 3000 copies of the poster, which had just been printed and not yet posted. The confiscation order stated that there "is strong suspicion" that the text of the poster was an offence against paragraph 97 of the Criminal Code. This paragraph makes it an offence "to slander the government . . . or one of its members in pursuance of the aim of undermining the German Federal Republic . . ."

The dinosaur poster is not the first poster of the No-Conscription Fellowship to be banned by the Bavarian authorities. In January this year another poster was prohibited because it posed the question: "Should millions of people be murdered, crippled or made homeless once again?"

Commenting on the ban on the dinosaur poster, the liberal newspaper "Sueddeutsche Zeitung" stated: "The Basic Law of the German Federal Republic lays down the right to refuse military service ... The state attorney will now have the task of proving that a citizen who points out a constitutional right has thereby endangered the Federal Republic. The facts of the case can be summed up in one sentence: a few hundred convinced conscientious objectors cannot possibly endanger the existence of the Federal Republic: but such action by the judicial authorities can certainly undermine confidence in the inviolability of our constitutional rights."

(Postscript: On March 28th a superior court in Munich reversed the ruling, and the posters were released.)

"Extinct – Too Much Armour-plate, Too Little Brain" says this West German poster which was banned by the anthorities

SOVIETS TAKE GRAVE VIEW OF WEST GERMAN A-BOMBS

On March 31st Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko announced officially that the Soviet Union was going to suspend all tests of nuclear weapons. In the course of his speech to the Supreme Soviet announcing suspension, Mr Gromyko dealt at length with the West German decision to equip the Wehrmacht with nuclear weapons. Here are the relevant passages of his speech:

The urgency of vigorous action to improve the international situation is all the more evident since there are forces at work which still persist in pushing the world in a diametrically opposite direction, that is to the aggravation of distrust and animosity between countries instead of increased confidence, to stepping up rather than ending the nuclear arms race, to war rather than to peace.

A telling reminder of the activity of these forces has come with the recent decision of the Bundestag of the Federal Republic of Germany, passed by the votes of the Government parties, which invests the Government with powers to arm the West German armed forces with atomic and rocket weapons. West German militarists have thus openly proclaimed that they accept atomic bombs and rockets to add to their armaments with the blessing of their Atlantic bloc partners.

It would be sheer folly to underrate the gravity of this step of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany. The elements framing the current policies of West Germany are steering the country down the same fateful road which was once traveled by Hitler Germany. It is a fact that the very same forces which at one time brought Hitler to power and were accomplices in his crimes wield great influence in the top political and military circles of West Germany. Nor can one forget that West Germany is the only European state whose Government is seeking to redraw the present frontiers in Europe. In these conditions, how can one assess the intention to arm the West German Army with atomic and rocket weapons? It cannot be interpreted otherwise than as a challenge to the European nations and, above all, to those bordering on Germany.

In an effort to vindicate their actions in one way or another, the West German political leaders are giving currency to the stories about a "danger of attack" from the U. S. S. R. or about the "menace of world communism".

(cont. on next page)

Once again the Germans are being treated to the poisonous food of hostility for the Soviet Union, as was done in Hitler Germany. You will recall that when the Nazis were preparing to launch the Second World War they did it to a similar accompaniment of a clamorous anti-Communist propaganda campaign. And the nations that allowed themselves to be taken in by that propaganda were the first to fall victim to their aggression.

The imperious calls for getting atomic and rocket weapons at any cost, which rang out at the recent Bundestag debate on atomic and rocket armaments for West Germany, were little, if at all, different from the hysterical pleas of the Nazis typical of the debates in the German Reichstag.

One cannot overlook the fact that atomic rearmament of the West German Bundeswehr is actively fostered by the United States of America, whose Government has executed a faceabout since the time the peoples of the U. S. S. R. and the United States fought in common against German aggression, to bring its European policy in line with the idea of the resurgence of German militarism.

It is far from accidental that the Adenauer Government hurriedly forced through the Bundestag a decision on atomic armament after West German Defense Minister Strauss had visited Washington. Quite recently American General Norstad, NATO's Supreme Commander, insisted in a public statement that the Bundeswehr be equipped with atomic weapons. The ruling circles of the United States are obviously seeking to turn Europe into a nuclear arms dump as soon as possible and are placing in the hands of West German militarists the torch with which to set this dump on fire.

The present leaders of West Germany are pretending to look for a solution to the country's security problem and to Germany's reunification in atomic bombs and rockets. But this is the reasoning of people to whom the interests of German security and the unity of the German nation are equally alien.

All talk of "security" is in this case nothing but a smoke screen. There is nothing and nobody threatening the Federal Republic of Germany, although its leaders are doing all they can to exacerbate the situation in Europe and are going out of their way to invite as great a danger as possible to their country.

If anything can be diametrically opposed to the security of West Germany it is precisely the road of atomic arms rivalry to which the country is being pushed by its present leaders. And if the plans of the Nazis who hoped to smash the Soviet Union by force of arms fell through, the current calculations of those in charge of West Germany's policies today are a million times more shortsighted and adventurous.

Can anyone seriously believe that, should Europe be involved in an atomic war, West Germany as a base for the conduct of such war would have any chance at all of surviving? Would it not be more correct to assume that the scorching flame of rocket and atomic war would sweep in the first place over the territory of Western Germany.

Twice in our lifetime the hand of German militarism, which let loose the murderous World Wars, has been cut off and the German people had to pay a dear price for the criminal policy of their rulers. Hardly anyone will deny that the retribution would be greater beyond all comparison should the crime be committed a third time.

As to the talk about the quest for German unity which accompanies the war preparations of the Federal Republic, that is sheer hypocrisy. The Soviet Government gave clear warning to the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany a year ago that arming of the Bundeswehr with atomic weapons and the conversion of West Germany into a hotbed of atomic war in Europe would do irreparable harm to the cause of national reunification of the German people.

The implementation of West German atomic armaments plans in the present circumstances means that its Government is deliberately making German reunion impossible. All things considered, West German Chancellor Adenauer and those at one with him are in a hurry to burn the bridges leading to closer contact and negotiations between both German states and thus block the only road still open to German unity via an agreement between the two German states—the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany. The decision to arm the Bundeswehr with atomic bombs and rockets tolls the knell for the unity of Germany, and that is what every German should know.

It is perfectly understandable in the light of these facts that plans for the atomic armament of the West German Bundeswehr should touch off a wave of indignation among the broadest sections of the West German population. Trade unions, many political parties, intellectuals and church circles are strongly protesting against these dangerous plans.

One should hope that the future of West Germany will in the long run be decided by forces which soberly appraise the situation and realize that to avoid disaster there is no other road for the German nation but that of peace and friendship with other peoples. It is still possible to avert the fateful development of events.

For a long time the Soviet Government has been repeatedly and in all seriousness warning the West German Government about the dangerous course it has been following toward the rebirth of German militarism. The Soviet Government has pointed out the danger to peace in Europe and, last but not least to West Germany itself, of the inevitable consequences attendant on West Germany's participation in preparing for an atomic war and equipping the West German Army with mass destruction weapons.

The conclusion of the Paris agreements, the involvement of West Germany in the aggressive military bloc under American leadership, the perpetuation of West Germany's occupation by foreign troops, the siting of atomic weapons of foreign powers on its territory and, finally, the decision to arm the Bundeswehr with atomic

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weapons — such are the stages through which West Germany is being pushed nearer to the brink of the chasm. No one is able to reproach the Soviet Union for not having given timely warning about the danger of this suicidal policy on the part of West Germany.

But to all these warnings the West German leaders, who have firmly bound themselves to NATO's aggressive plans, replied with obscure and lulling phrases. They tried to make believe that these warnings were senseless and that there was no danger. Until very recently they even denied the existence of plans to arm the Bundeswehr with atomic weapons. Even as late as the summer of 1957, in reply to a note of the Soviet Government, the West German Government declared that West Germany "does not possess any type of atomic weapons and has not been soliciting deliveries of such weapons". It was clear at that time that these assurances had a single purpose — to mislead world opinion as well as the Germans themselves, rush through the equipment of the West German Army with atomic weapons with the least possible notice and then surprise the world with a fait accompli. The current actions of the West German Government fully confirm the correctness of that evaluation. It was a policy of deliberate deceit of the German people and the peoples of other countries.

Now a decision has been openly announced to equip the Bundeswehr with atomic bombs and rockets.

Some make believe that the decision to arm Western Germany with atomic weapons is nothing "out of the ordinary," that it is merely one of NATO's current measures to which the world has grown accustomed and there is therefore no cause for particular alarm. That is not so. The decision to arm the Bundeswehr with atomic weapons is of special significance because these weapons are being made available to the forces that unleashed the Second World War, which took the lives of tens of millions.

It is easy to understand the alarm aroused by this step in the European countries, primarily those bordering on Germany.

It may well be that the danger of what is happening is not realized by everyone. It will be recalled that the danger of Hitlerism was not discerned at once by one and all. However, this does not make the danger any smaller and the Soviet Union believes it to be its duty to indicate it. It does so not because it fears the arming of West Germany with atomic weapons. The Soviet Union possesses all the necessary means to suppress aggression no matter where it comes from and to crush the aggressor. And if the Soviet Government does express its concern and warns against arming Western Germany with atomic weapons, it does so because it realizes the danger of this step to European peace.

One must needs dwell on the role played in all this by Britain and France, whose Governments have consented to the arming of the West German Bundeswehr with atomic and rocket weapons.

The peoples of Britain and France have long been misled by the lulling talk of some sort of "control" over West Germany's armament. It was said, for example: Do not worry, Frenchmen and Britishers—Western Germany will be under such control that it will not be allowed to have either atomic bombs or rockets. The Soviet Union had warned at that time that these statements about some sort of limitations are made to mislead and deceive the peoples. What do we see today? The Bundestag's decision of March 26 opens every avenue for arming the West German militarists with atomic weapons.

It is meet to ask the politicians who in the period of the signing of the Paris agreements took such pains to gull the French people with calming statements, advising them to place their trust in control over Western Germany — Where is your control today? Will their eyes be opened to the real state of affairs only when the soldiers of the Bundeswehr once again tread the streets of Paris?

The West European members of NATO are today being calmed by assurances that West Germany will be able to use its atomic weapons only with the sanction of the NATO command, that is the American generals. It is questionable that this is a great solace to the British or the French, the Belgians or the Norwegians. What a marvelous plan this is — to place the decision of unleashing a world atomic war actually in the hands of former Nazis and American generals!

If the arming of West Germany with atomic weapons becomes a fact, it will inevitably raise a new obstacle to an agreement between the powers on disarmament and the responsibility, like the mark of Cain, will lie on the Government of West Germany and the governments of the countries which have been pushing it in that direction.

National Front Nixes Bomb

The National Front of Democratic Germany, which includes representatives of all parties and organisations in East Germany, has promised full support to all measures taken in West Germany to oppose the armament of the West German Wehrmacht with nuclear weapons.

In an official statement issued on April 2nd the National Front stated: "We appeal to all members of the Social Democratic Party, the Free Democratic Party, and to all opponents of Adenauer's war policy inside the Christian Democratic Union; we appeal to trade unionists, peasants, scientists, and all Christians . . .

"Let us fight shoulder to shoulder against atomic death. The National Front brings together millions of people of various views and from various parties. This shows that it is possible and necessary to bring together all political forces in the whole of Germany in order to win success for the cause of peace and national renaissance.

"We are prepared to give you every help if you adopt the weapon of political mass strike in order to strike the devilish atomic weapons from the hands of the warmongers.

"For an atom-free zone in Europe!"

"For the coalition of the two German states in a German confederation!"

"For a peace treaty with the whole of Germany!"

The campaign against nuclear arms in West Germany was supported by big demonstrations staged in East Berlin and other cities of the German Democratic Republic.

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BERLIN NOTEBOOK

By John Peet

Chancellor Adenauer has appointed a new West German Ambassador to Australia, a gentleman named Dr Hans Muehlenfeld. A suspicious Australian reader, remembering that GERMAN REPORT has shown a sharp eye in the past for blood-stains on the white vests of West German diplomats, asked us to scuttle through the archives and see whether we could find any brown shirts or jack-boots in Dr Muehlenfeld's cupboard.

Conservative

A first glance at the records seemed to disclose nothing very startling about the worthy doctor's past history. He was born in 1901, studied law and modern history, practised as a lawyer during the Hitler period, and from 1949 to 1953 he headed the fraction of the right-wing German Party in the West German parliament. It seemed clear that he was a fairly conservative type, but there was nothing to tie him up with the nazis.

In an effort to discover what made him tick, if anything, I even went to the length of ploughing through a book which he published in 1952. The book has the imposing title "Politics Without Illusions — The Conservative Tasks of Our Time", and was published by R. Oldenbourg in Munich. I can heartily recommend this book — to anyone who reads German and suffers from insomnia; it is an almost certain cure. At enormous length the worthy doctor says almost nothing, though quite a lot of his sentences seem to mean something the first time you look at them. While reading the book I was irresistibly reminded of the song in Gilbert and Sullivan's "Mikado" about making the punishment fit the crime, in which the criminal was made to suffer various frightful punishments. One of these punishments was to be "Sent to hear sermons from mystical Germans, who preach from ten to four".

Skeletons

But the writing of a boring book is a relatively praiseworthy activity, if compared to the nazi crimes committed by some of West Germany's other diplomats, so I was on the point of abandoning my search for skeletons in Dr Muehlenfeld's cupboard when I came across an intriguing article in the West German news magazine "Spiegel" dated February 18th 1953. This article does not clear up the question as to what Dr Muehlenfeld did in the past, if anything, but opens a tantalising window. Here are the main points of the article, exactly as published in this West German magazine:

". . . Dr Hans Muehlenfeld has for a long time been eyeing the diplomat's frock-coat, the goal of the successful parliamentarian.

"His first attempt failed, however. He wanted to be accredited as Ambassador to the court of King Paul of Greece . . . but the king suggested that he should not apply for the post. The reason for this dissuasion has not been made public.

"But in all probability the Dutch have discovered the reason in the meantime. This is suggested by rumours in diplomatic circles in the Dutch capital.

Fiasco

"After the fiasco in Athens the German Federal Republic asked Holland for their agreement to name Muehlenfeld as ambassador to the Hague . . .

"An unofficial answer to this request was given by the newspaper 'Het Vrije Volk', Socialist Amsterdam government paper: 'We must say that we are very surprised by the German intention of naming Dr Muehlenfeld as ambassador to the Hague. We know little or nothing about Dr Muehlenfeld's personal or political history. We know only that he is chairman of the parliamentary fraction of a party which has gained the name of "Neo-Nazi" both by its actions and by its principles . . .'

"If diplomatic rumours in the Hague are to be believed, more solid objections to the appointment of Muehlenfeld have lately become known. One story states that the West German Charge d'Affaires Werner von Holleben visited the Dutch Foreign Ministry on February 6th, and forgot his dispatch case there. It was returned to him the next day. The dispatch case is said to have contained considerable parts of Dr Muehlenfeld's personal file, including partly coded and partly de-coded secret information about the new ambassador. The most important document is said to have been an explanation of the reasons why King Paul and the Greek Government decided against accepting him in Athens."

As I said, the article gives only a tantalising glimpse of some hushed-up scandal. Perhaps some Dutch reader can supply us more information about this mysterious case.

Long Words

Some time ago, when I was walking down the Friedrichstrasse, one of East Berlin's main streets, I found an English friend standing enthralled watching the news bulletin on an electric bulletin board above the street: you know, one of those intriguing strips made up of several thousand electric light bulbs, across which the words race from right to left.

The news was more than usually dull that day, so I asked him what the interest was. "I am waiting for one of those long German words" he said, "one that is so long that the first letters have vanished on the left before the last have appeared on the right". So we watched for a while. There were some near misses, fine massive words like "Bundestagsabgeordneter" (which just means M. P.) but none of them were quite long enough.

A few days later, after he had left Berlin, I was able to drop him a postcard, reporting that I had seen it happen. The winning word was "Reichsbahnausbesserungswerkstatt" which means railway repair shop.

Simplification

This little reminiscence is just leading up to a fine complicated new title which I have just noticed in the East German press. It is not all in one word but it has a certain fine dignity all the same. I shall not present you with this title in German, but I think that even in English translation you can get the full effect: "Central Operational Staff for the Organisation and Control of the Carrying Out of the Law on the Perfection and Simplification of the Work of the State Apparatus in the German Democratic Republic". The key word in this title would seem to be "simplification".

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